



Getting the Word Out - It's Up to You!

Teri Mehler, Principal Assistant, Governor's Office of Early Childhood Development

Did you know? • 10% of children under age 5 have significant vision problems.

The number increases to 25%, or 1 out of 4 children, who have vision difficulties in grades K - 6.

- It costs \$27,000 a year for a residential program to educate a child who is deaf. It costs \$6,000 a year to provide early detection and intervention for that same child at an early age.

Being able to see  and being able to hear  are the most basic building blocks that allow children to participate in social situations and in classroom learning.

Now more children will enter school ready to succeed because we know their most basic senses are intact or that the proper corrections are being made.

How will we know? Because KIDS NOW, Kentucky's Early Childhood Initiative, includes a requirement that all babies be screened at birth for actual or potential hearing difficulties.

Universal Newborn Hearing Screening will identify children with potential hearing loss. Screening information will be given to parents/caregivers to help ensure early intervention, where needed.

New requirements that all children who enter public school have a complete eye examination by January 1 of the first year of public school, mean vision problems that have sometimes gone undetected will be more likely to receive correction.

A thorough exam by an optometrist or ophthalmologist can identify problems such as amblyopia ("lazy eye"), which are most easily corrected at an early age. These problems are typically not detectable through a screening process.

How can you help? If you are a child-care provider, use your newsletter, your daily contacts with parents, or your bulletin board to let parents/guardians know about the vision exam requirement.

A complete vision exam performed by an optometrist or ophthalmologist any time prior to January 1 of the first year a child enters school is acceptable. The examination results must be recorded on a Kentucky Eye Examination Form for school entry. These forms should be available at Optometrists' or Ophthalmologists' offices or from the Kentucky Optometric Association Web Site at <http://www.kyeyes.org/Documents/Examform.rtf>.

A vision exam is recommended at age 3 with another at age 5-6 to check for vision changes. You can help familiarize parents with the new requirements and acquaint them with the importance of the exam.

You can reassure any pregnant women you have contact with - that if their baby is born in a Kentucky hospital, the baby will be screened for potential hearing problems.

Thank your legislator for supporting the early childhood initiative. Healthy young children mean a healthier future for Kentucky.

Thanks for passing the word along!

This article will be appearing in the Autumn 2001 LINK that will be out in a couple of weeks:

Vision Exams Required for Children Entering Public School

How YOU Can Help!! Spread the Word!!

Teri Mehler, Governor's Office of Early Childhood Development

By January 1 of the first year a child is enrolled in a public school program, all young children are required to have a vision examination (NOT A SCREENING).

This vision examination must be done by an optometrist or ophthalmologist. Parents/guardians must obtain the Kentucky Eye Examination for School Entry form from the doctor who examines the child's eyes. This form must be submitted to the child's school as proof the child has received the required vision examination.

Children whose family incomes are in the 200-250 percent range of the federal poverty level who are not covered by Medicaid or KCHIP are eligible for financial assistance for the cost of the eye examination. Children who do not have private insurance that covers vision examinations are also eligible for financial assistance for the cost of the exam.

For information about financial assistance, call the Family Resource and Youth Services Center (FRYSC) in your school district or the regional office of the Commission on Children with Special Health Care Needs (CCSHCN). For additional information, call the central office of CCSHCN at 1-800-232-1160.

CHILD CARE PROVIDERS - Let families know of this important requirement for a vision examination.

Screenings often miss visual difficulties such as amblyopia (lazy eye) that, if diagnosed before age five, may be treated effectively. Let's ensure the families of the children in your care have information about the need for a full vision examination. You are the information *link*.

Thanks.....Linda Bratton